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THE PROGRAM OF SELECTING STUDENTS TO TEACHER EDUCATION AT KANSAS STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE

Willard Stibal

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE
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Prior to the last decade, most colleges and universities permitted students who met minimum college admittance requirements to enroll in teacher education curricula. Further, if students could meet only the minimum credits and grade-point requirements for graduation, they were automatically recommended for teaching certification. Today, colleges are recognizing a need for selecting to education curricula those students showing a high degree of promise for success in teaching.

For more than a decade, Kansas State Teachers College has maintained a plan of selecting students for admission to teacher education. In a continuing attempt to strengthen the program, through the processes of bringing increased student counseling and wider faculty participation in making decisions about the selection of prospective teachers, the College recently appointed a Director of Teacher Selection.

General nature of any selective admission and retention plan. Teacher selection and teacher retention, as applied to individual students, are a continuous single process. The student submits a written application with such supporting documents as appropriate recommendations and medical reports. If the student meets qualification standards, he is accepted in the program of teacher education. By maintaining or improving these qualities, the student is retained in the program. In summary, selection-retention refers to the official college procedure of securing the enrollment in teacher education curricula of the most promising people for satisfying the requirements of teaching.

Difficulties in selecting promising students. Everyone should be aware that predicting the success of the teacher or the prospective teacher is difficult. In addition to a consideration of only personal qualities, some

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communities require different teacher traits than do other communities. Furthermore, students, as well as teachers, frequently change in their competencies over a period of time.

Difficulties in predicting the success of teachers are apparent in research. For example, no conclusive evidence seems to relate teaching success to college academic successes. The difficulty of establishing valid "successful" and "not successful" teacher criterion groups is further complicated by the discovery that, in criterion groups of successful or unsuccessful teachers, the personal traits of people within any particular group include surprisingly wide personality characteristics. As research in teaching improves, however, more definite predictive conclusions may be made. In the interim, vocational or professional decisions must be made in terms of available information about effective teachers.

The program at Kansas State Teachers College. Selection-retention at Kansas State Teachers College follows the typical pattern for the more selective college programs as analyzed by Dr. Ruth Stout.[1] The student makes a special application for admission to the teacher education program, having stipulations beyond requirements for institutional matriculation and continuance. Formal application for admission to the teacher education program must be accomplished during the second semester of the sophomore year (or when the student has from forty-five to sixty semester credit hours). Students who make the decision to prepare for teaching during their junior or senior years, or after they have earned a baccalaureate degree, are required to make application during their first enrollment semester in a professional education course.

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[1] Ruth A. Stout. "Selective Admissions and Retention Practices in Teacher Education." Journal of Teacher Education. 8:29-30. October, 1957.

The student applicant completes the personal information items indicated on three sides of a cumulative manila folder; in addition, he writes a short autobiography. The Education Office adds to the file a health report, a minimum of three references, a transcript of the student academic records, and a profile of placement examination results. The test profile includes an entering percentile score relative to general ability, English achievement, mathematics achievement, science achievement, and social studies achievement. The profile also indicates interest and personality ratings.

The earned grade-point average of each student, found in the registrar's cumulative IBM grade-point average report, is added to the file. A screening speech adequacy report is also used. In special cases, other measures of personal characteristics used in making judgments include the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory and the Edwards Personality Inventory.

The preliminary review of data is made by the Director of Teacher Selection and the head of Elementary Education or the head of Secondary Education. This review includes a preliminary recommendation of either acceptance, non-acceptance, or a conditional acceptance. These recommendations then are submitted to the respective selection committee for appropriate action.

During the 1959-60 fall semester, approximately 130 students were not accepted to the teacher education program or were accepted only upon a conditional basis. Frequently, a grade-point average of less than 2.00 was the cause of conditional acceptance. Those not accepted were refused admission upon some other basis than low grades; and all those not accepted currently are pursuing either a vocational goal other than teacher education or a goal other than the original area of concentration.

The final selection committee for elementary applicants includes the Chairman of the Education Division, the Placement Director, the Director of

Student Services, the head of Elementary Education and the Director of Teacher Selection. For the secondary level, the committee is a variable one depending upon the different areas of concentration. The selection committee for secondary applicants includes the department heads for the particular student's major areas of concentration, the head of secondary education rather than the head of elementary education, and the other respective administrative staff members listed for the elementary committee. At the secondary level, all department heads are included in a meeting to screen applicants. Later, special meetings are scheduled to study further the information about some individuals.

Principles for teacher selection. Methods of operation at Kansas State Teachers College, may be stated in terms of selected principles. These include:

1. All college departments and staff members should be included in the active evaluation of students for teacher education. Personnel reporting forms relative to teacher selection are available to each faculty member.

2. The major emphasis of selection and retention should be on personal aspects other than mere scholastic achievement. Teaching potential includes assessments of interests, appearance and personality, health, emotional stability, character, communication ability, and professional standards as well as scholastic achievement.

3. Evaluation should be based on as much pertinent information about students as is operationally feasible to secure and use.

4. The individual student, in this democratic society, should have some degree of determination relative to his own continuance in teacher education. The student's motivation for teaching is an important consideration. Also, the college grants and informs the student of appeal channels relative to action of the selection committee.

5. The services of other trained college personnel in testing and counseling should be utilized.

6. Student records should be as complete as possible and should be filed in a manner to promote the selective-retention process. A written summary of all interviewswith students should be kept.

7. Students not approved to teacher education should be helped in finding an appropriate and acceptable college and vocational goal.

8. Interviews with students should include a consideration of individual student problems. The common problem of study habits will be considered, and methods of improving study procedures will be discussed with individual students.

9. During interviews the Director of Teacher Selection will give the student as much information as possible about the present status and improvement needed in such areas as appearance, speech, social behavior, wholesome inter-personal relationships, academic background, apparent potential for college work and for teaching, evaluations of student effort, participation in extra-curricular activities, and emotional considerations, and the like.

10. An attempt should be made to provide information to each student in connection with teacher education and the personal characteristics for such work.

11. Effective selection and retention involve continuous processes extending over time intervals of training.

12. An attempt should be made to apply research findings to teacher selection and to develop other research tools.

13. Follow-ups will be made of students not approved for teacher education. In time, research follow-ups will be made of the successes of all students.

An attempt is made to operate the program in a manner consistent with the above stated principles. As processes at the college develop, other improvements in the over-all program will be instituted.

Plans for future operation of the program. In a survey conducted by this college, all other responding teacher training institutions offering types of training other than teacher education, admit students to secondary education at or later than the junior level. This is also true at Kansas State Teachers College. With the possible future addition of more staff personnel, the College plans to initiate a systematic interview and counseling program of all entering students in an effort to better guide students in their academic pursuits and in their vocational plans.

The College at this time has developed some new types of measurement devices including a teacher semantic differential test and a "Q" test for students. An item analysis is being made on these items and further validity

studies will be pursued. Other measurement devices will be developed and used in evaluating specific students for teacher education. Also, some type of achievement appraisal will be administered to the student at the time that he enters the professional sequence curricula.

Finally, the College is preparing longitudinal research studies to determine characteristics of better teachers and less effective teachers. In these studies, a major problem will be the adequate determination of criterion groups of better and poorer teachers. Further, these studies will follow the approach of analyzing combinations of characteristics of teachers.